By
MIKE W. BARR
MIKE OKAMOTO
RICK MAGYAR
JERRY BINGHAM

*Full-Color Series*

$1.95 U.S./$2.50 Can.

Innovation welcomes cover artist **Jerry Bingham** and ***THE VAMPIRE LESTAT***'s pencil artist **Mike Okamoto** to this issue of the Eisner & Harvey Awards-nominated series ***THE MAZE AGENCY.***

Join *Jennifer Mays*, New York's prettiest detective, and *Gabriel Webb*, amateur sleuth and true crime writer, in a fine fair-play whodunit that challenges you to solve the mystery as it unfolds!

THIS ISSUE: In "Too Much Bliss," Lieutenant Bliss is accused of murdering her ex-husband! So Jennifer Mays goes undercover to find the real killer. ***THE MAZE AGENCY*** has always been known for its depth and attention to detail in its supporting cast. Readers have asked to see more background on the tough-but-sexy Lieutenant Bliss, and this story definitely delivers the goods -- with details, surprises, and Daddy Bliss!

*Death*
*Is*
*Bliss!*

# INNOVATION™

# Further Into The MAZE...

Only a couple of months ago, I was writing about *THE MAZE AGENCY SPECIAL #1* . If you've picked it up -- and I certainly hope you did -- you saw that it was a helluva book.

But now we've been planning for the summer schedule...part of the plans involve the *HERO ALLIANCE ANNUAL #1*...and a *HERO ALLIANCE/JUSTICE MACHINE* cross-over called *IDENTITY CRISIS*...and this series, *THE MAZE AGENCY*.

Mike Barr and I were talking about trying to top *THE MAZE AGENCY SPECIAL* we released in March. We think we've succeeded, with *THE MAZE AGENCY ANNUAL #1*, which will be coming your way next month. We're talking full color, $2.75, and loaded with story and art.

To start with, printer, distributors, and freight companies willing, it'll head toward store shelves June 2, 1990. That's the 50th Anniversary of Will Eisner's *The Spirit*.

And Mike and I hoped to do something terrific in honor of that event.

It began, innocently enough, as plans for *THEMAZE AGENCY #16*. Mike would write a seven-page story *hommage* to Mr. Eisner's classic character, and the second story in the issue would be the "big" story about the next step in Gabe and Jen's relationship.

But it grew from there. We kept hearing such things as "Well, gee, if you're gonna do a *Spirit* riff, you should get **Mike Ploog** or **William Messner-Loebs** to work on it."

Yeah, right. Like we'd have a chance at getting either of these busy, busy guys. Uh-Huh. Sure.

Actually, we went out and got *both* **Mike Ploog** *and* **William Messner-Loebs**! Part of Mike's cover is pictured on the inside back cover of this issue. And as I type this, Bill's inking **Rick Magyar**'s pencils on the story.

And **Allen Curtis** is illustrating the longer story in the issue. But we wanted to top it even more -- it had gotten so interesting that we wanted to make it an *event*.

So: After sifting through various letters, we found that some people were pining away that the "Murder At The Comiconvention" story illustrated by **Adam Hughes** could be found *only* in the *MAZE BOOK*. They wanted to see it in color (though I personally feel that *MAZE* would be more appropriately moody and lovely to look at in black-and-white, and I think *MAZE BOOK : THE MAZE AGENCY COLLECTION #1* bears that out.

So we're adding that story -- in color -- for the first time!

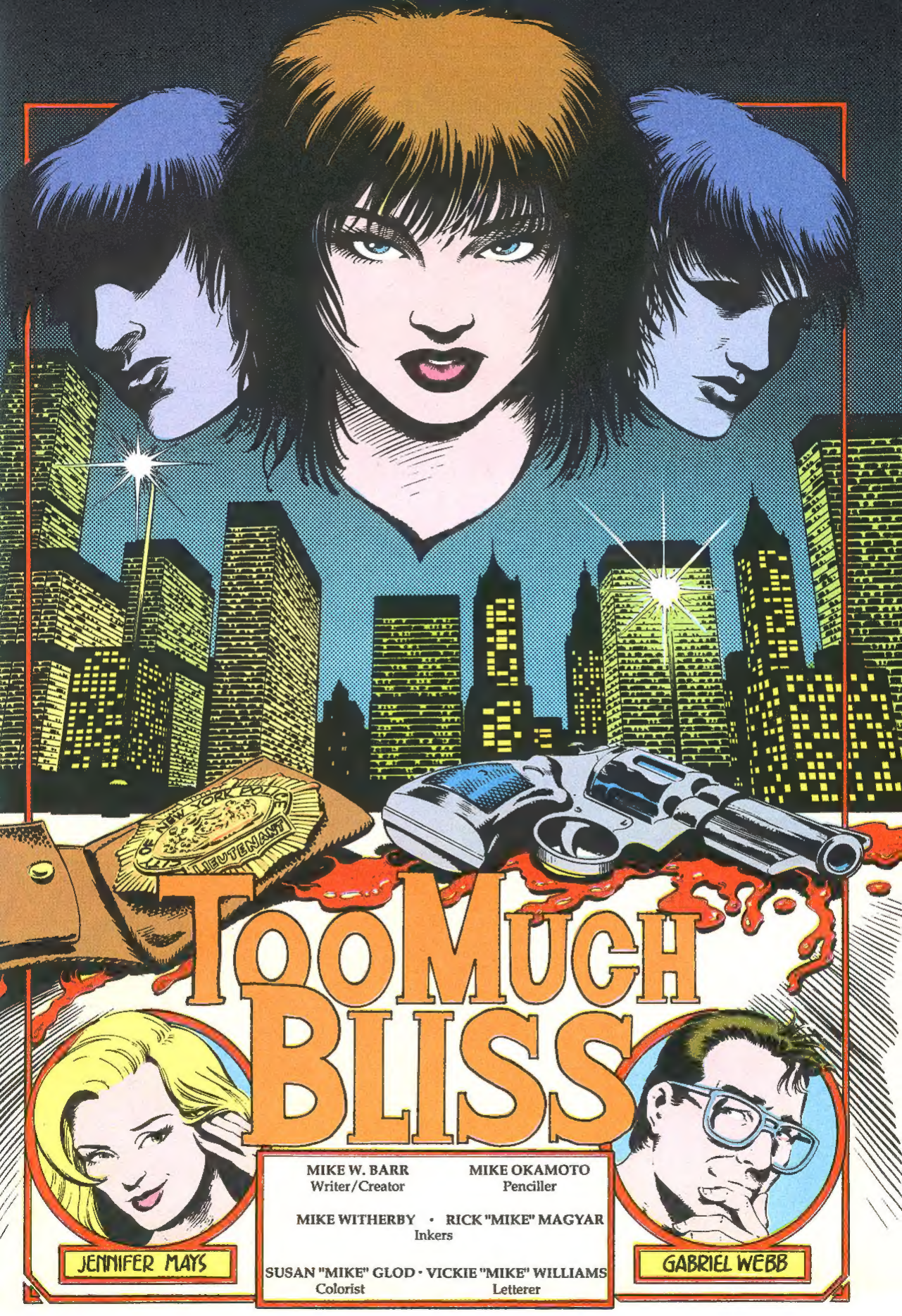
And we're knocking around some bonus goodies to include in it, as well.

And as an aside: Mike Barr also called Will to let him know we were doing this *hommage* story. Because, y'see, one has to be sensible and careful about such things -- there comes a point where, if somebody catches you in a bank taking cash with you after hours, you're not *hommaging* the money.

And *THE MAZE AGENCY ANNUAL #1* is a special "thank you" to Will's wonderful work, done right, and with his blessings.

*-- David Campiti*
*April, 1990*

THE MAZE AGENCY®
Vol. 1, No. 15, August 1990 issue.
Published by the INNOVATIVE CORPORATION, 3622 Jacob Street, Wheeling, WV 26003, (304) 232-7701. David Campiti, President & Publisher. Diana Light, Operations Manager. Scott Rockwell, Art Director. Jim Elliott, Licensing & Marketing Director. Story, text & art © 1990 Mike W. Barr. Other editorial material © 1990 Innovative Corp. The MAZE Agency, all prominent characters in this issue, and the distinctive likenesses thereof, are ® 1990 Mike W. Barr. Innovation logo TM 1990 Innovative Corp. All rights reserved. Color separations by Susan Glod. Cover colors by Scott Rockwell. For advertising rates or licensing information, call (304) 232-7703. Fax #304-232-4010. Printed by Boyd Press. *It's an Innovation Publication!*




# TOO MUCH BLISS

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Writer/Creator

MIKE OKAMOTO
Penciller

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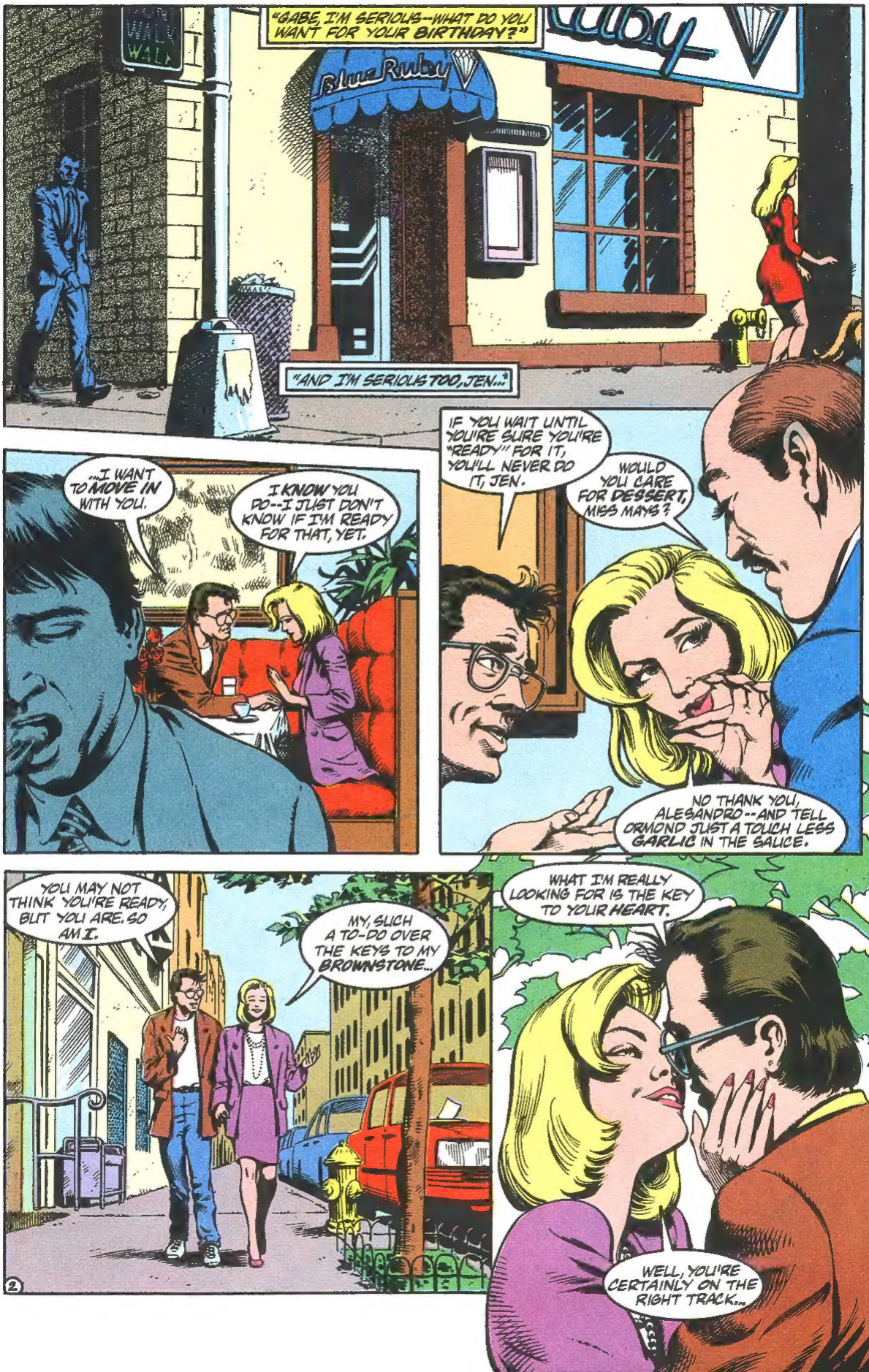
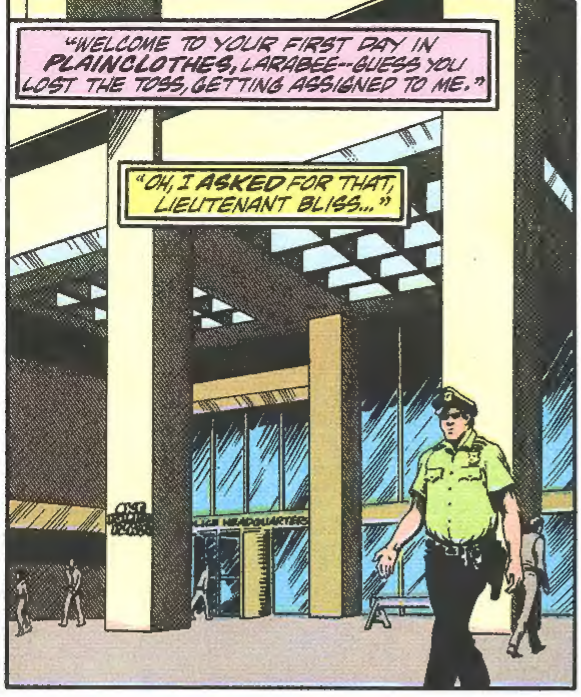
Inkers

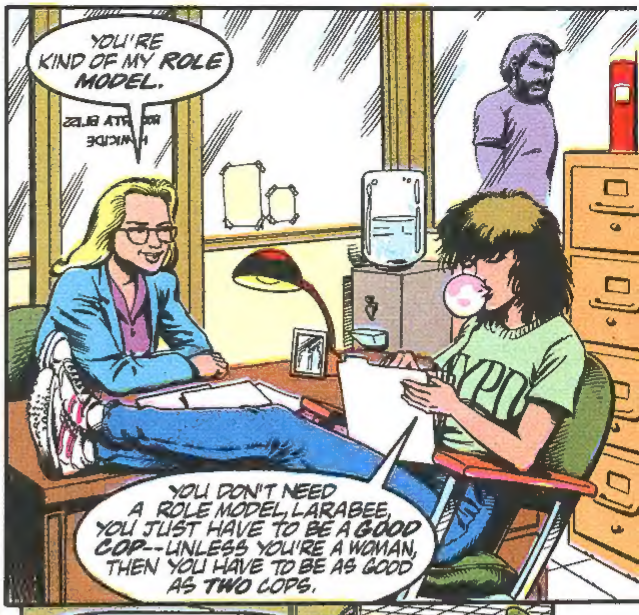
SUSAN "MIKE" GLOD • VICKIE "MIKE" WILLIAMS
Colorist Letterer

JENNIFER MAYS

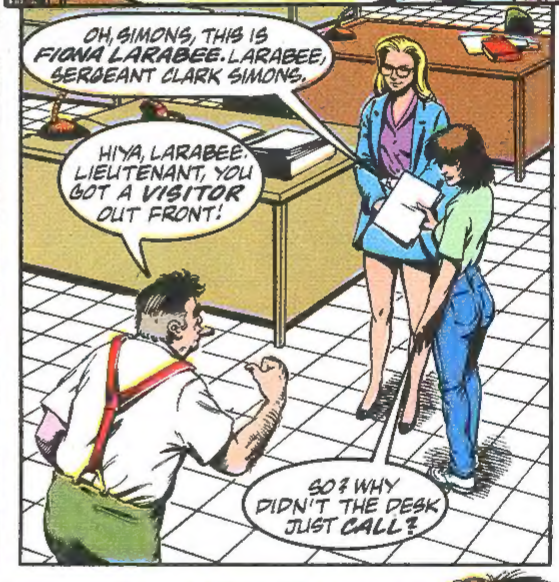
GABRIEL WEBB


"GABE, I'M SERIOUS--WHAT DO YOU WANT FOR YOUR BIRTHDAY?"
Blue Ruby
"AND I'M SERIOUS TOO, JEN..."
...I WANT TO MOVE IN WITH YOU.
I KNOW YOU DO--I JUST DON'T KNOW IF I'M READY FOR THAT, YET.
IF YOU WAIT UNTIL YOU'RE SURE YOU'RE "READY" FOR IT, YOU'LL NEVER DO IT, JEN.
WOULD YOU CARE FOR DESSERT, MISS MAYS?
NO THANK YOU, ALESANDRO--AND TELL ORMOND JUST A TOUCH LESS GARLIC IN THE SAUCE.
YOU MAY NOT THINK YOU'RE READY, BUT YOU ARE. SO AM I.
MY, SUCH A TO-DO OVER THE KEYS TO MY BROWNSTONE...
WHAT I'M REALLY LOOKING FOR IS THE KEY TO YOUR HEART.
WELL, YOU'RE CERTAINLY ON THE RIGHT TRACK...
2


"WELCOME TO YOUR FIRST DAY IN PLAINCLOTHES, LARABEE--GUESS YOU LOST THE TOSS, GETTING ASSIGNED TO ME."
"OH, I ASKED FOR THAT, LIEUTENANT BLISS..."


YOU'RE KIND OF MY ROLE MODEL.
YOU DON'T NEED A ROLE MODEL, LARABEE, YOU JUST HAVE TO BE A GOOD COP--UNLESS YOU'RE A WOMAN, THEN YOU HAVE TO BE AS GOOD AS TWO COPS.

YOU MIGHT AS WELL TAKE THAT DESK THERE. LET ME INTRODUCE YOU AROUND...
"LOOT?"


OH, SIMONS, THIS IS FIONA LARABEE. LARABEE, SERGEANT CLARK SIMONS.
HIYA, LARABEE. LIEUTENANT, YOU GOT A VISITOR OUT FRONT!
SO? WHY DIDN'T THE DESK JUST CALL?

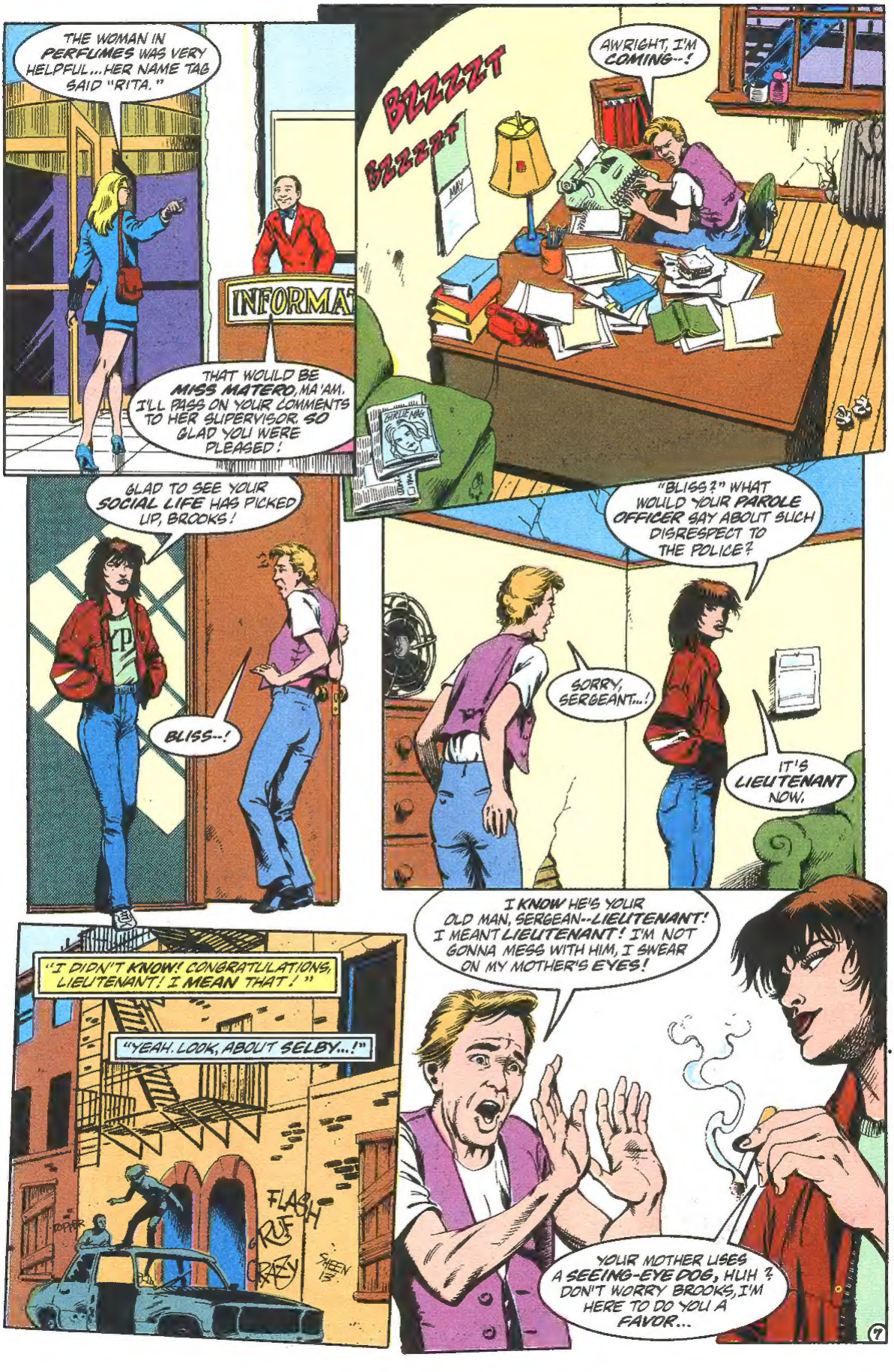
IT'S KINDA TRICKY, LOOT, IT'S...
DAMN!

THAT MUST HAVE BEEN VERY BAD NEWS.
YOU GOT THAT RIGHT. C'MON, KID, I'LL SHOW YOU WHERE THE COFFEE MACHINE IS.

I TOLD YOU I DIDN'T WANT TO SEE YOU. WE HAVE NOTHING TO SAY TO EACH OTHER, TERRY.
YOU DIDN'T GIVE ME A CHANCE, BOBBIE...
POLICE MEMORIAL
...I WANT A CHANCE TO MAKE IT RIGHT FOR YOU, AND OUR SONS.
I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'VE GONE STRAIGHT, TERRY--NOT WHILE YOU'RE STILL SITTING ON THE DRUG MONEY YOU PUT AWAY!
THEY COULD NEVER PROVE THAT, BOBBIE, AND YOU KNOW WHY? IT'S A LIE. BUT I'M OUT NOW, AND YOU LOOK GOOD...
DON'T EVEN TRY, TERRY! THERE'S NO PLACE IN MY LIFE FOR YOU ANY MORE--PERSONAL OR PROFESSIONAL!
YOU CAN TURN IT OFF THAT EASY? WE HAD SOMETHING GOOD...
WE HAD EVERYTHING I EVER WANTED--UNTIL YOU PISSED IT AWAY. YOU'RE HISTORY, TERRY, YOU'RE OUT OF MY LIFE NOW.
WHAT ABOUT THE BOYS? THEY'RE MY SONS, TOO!
YOU COME ANYWHERE NEAR THOSE KIDS AND YOU'RE DEAD, YOU UNDERSTAND?
LARABEE, I'VE GOT A JOB FOR YOU!
SURE, LIEUTENANT...

YOU SURE THIS IS DEPARTMENT BUSINESS, LOOT?
SHUT UP, SIMONS!
SIMONS
Chez Manhattan
21
YOU'RE LATE, TERRY.
YEAH, LIKE YOU'VE GOT A MILLION OTHER CLIENTS! IF YOU'RE SO BUSY, LET'S GET DOWN TO BRASS TACKS, ALICIA--
-- WHAT'S THE CHANCE OF ME GAINING CUSTODY OF MY SONS?
I WON'T LIE TO YOU, TERRY-WITH YOUR RECORD, AND YOUR EX-WIFE'S STANDING, THEY'RE NOT GOOD. I CAN SWING YOU SOME VISITING PRIVILEGES, BUT THAT'S IT.
THAT'S NOT GOOD ENOUGH! I WANT SOLE CUSTODY! THAT BITCH CHANGED THEIR LAST NAME TO HERS, AND GOD KNOWS WHAT SHE'S TOLD THEM ABOUT ME!
PROBABLY JUST THE TRUTH! IT WILL TAKE SOME TIME FOR YOU TO TURN YOUR LIFE AROUND, TERRY..
...AND MARRIAGE TO A SOLID CITIZEN LIKE ME IS JUST THE WAY TO START! I'VE GOT THE LICENSE, LET'S DO IT TONIGHT!
Chez
nhattan
6

I WANT TO, ALICIA, BUT NOT UNTIL I HAVE MY SONS BACK.
WILL YOU CALL ME LATER?
SURE THING. YOU CAN COVER THIS, CAN'T YOU? I'M A LITTLE SHORT.
WILL THERE BE ANYTHING ELSE, MS. COCHRAN?
THAT WILL BE ALL, THANK YOU.
CRADDOCK'S
HI, DOLL! FEEL LIKE A LITTLE LUNCH?
TERRY--!
TERRY, NOT AT WORK! I NEED THIS JOB--AT LEAST UNTIL YOU COME ACROSS WITH ALL THAT MONEY YOU SAY YOU GOT!
I GOT IT, ALL RIGHT, BUT I CAN'T GO AFTER IT YET, DOLL! LET'S NOT DISCUSS THAT IN PUBLIC, HUH?


THE WOMAN IN PERFUMES WAS VERY HELPFUL...HER NAME TAG SAID "RITA."
INFORMA
THAT WOULD BE MISS MATERO, MA'AM. I'LL PASS ON YOUR COMMENTS TO HER SUPERVISOR. SO GLAD YOU WERE PLEASED!
BZZZZT
BZZZZT
AWRIGHT, I'M COMING--!
GLAD TO SEE YOUR SOCIAL LIFE HAS PICKED UP, BROOKS!
BLISS--!
"BLISS?" WHAT WOULD YOUR PAROLE OFFICER SAY ABOUT SUCH DISRESPECT TO THE POLICE?
SORRY, SERGEANT...!
IT'S LIEUTENANT NOW.
"I DIDN'T KNOW! CONGRATULATIONS, LIEUTENANT! I MEAN THAT!"
"YEAH. LOOK, ABOUT SELBY...!"
I KNOW HE'S YOUR OLD MAN, SERGEAN--LIEUTENANT! I MEANT LIEUTENANT! I'M NOT GONNA MESS WITH HIM, I SWEAR ON MY MOTHER'S EYES!
YOUR MOTHER USES A SEEING-EYE DOG, HUH? DON'T WORRY BROOKS, I'M HERE TO DO YOU A FAVOR...
FLASH
CRAZY
7

...HE'S PRETTY STEAMED BECAUSE YOU TURNED STATE'S EVIDENCE TO NAIL HIM. IT'S NOT FUN FOR A CROOKED COP BEHIND BARS.
I KNOW, BUT WHAT CAN I DO? I CAN'T LEAVE TOWN WITHOUT MY PAROLE OFFICER'S OKAY, AND--
THAT'S WHERE I COME IN, BROOKS. I CAN HELP YOU.
YOU CAN? BUT I THOUGHT YOU AND SELBY WERE--
NOT ANY MORE, WE'RE NOT. IF HE HASSLES YOU AT ALL--IF HE CUTS YOU OFF IN THE SUBWAY--YOU TELL ME, UNDERSTAND? AS LONG AS YOU'RE STAYING CLEAN, I'M ON YOUR SIDE.
O-OKAY...
BUT IF I CATCH YOU IN POSSESSION OF ANYTHING STRONGER THAN TYLENOL, YOU'RE BACK INSIDE! UNDERSTAND?
YES, SIR!
MA'AM! I MEANT MA'AM!
WHAT HAVE YOU GOT FOR ME, LARABEE?
I LEFT THE SUBJECT AT HIS HOTEL, AFTER HE HAD LUNCH WITH A MISS RITA MATERO--ADDRESS ATTACHED...
...BEFORE THAT, HE MET A MS. ALICIA COCHRAN AT THE CHEZ MANHATTAN. MS. COCHRAN IS A LAWYER WHO'S RECENTLY OPENED HER OWN PRACTICE, DEALING PRIMARILY WITH CHILD CUSTODY CASES--
DAMN IT!

# BACK ISSUES PLUS!

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#11 -- "Twas The Crime Before Christmas" ($1.95)
#12 -- Adam Hughes art! ($2.50)
#13 -- Hughes cover! "Justice Girl" ($1.95)
#14 -- Paul Smith cover! ($1.95)
#15 -- All about Bliss! Bingham cover. Art by Okamoto, artist of Vampire Lestat! ($1.95)
SPECIAL #1 -- Bill Willingham, Alan Davis, Magyar art! ($2.75)
ANNUAL #1 --Eisner hommage issue. Art by Ploog and Loebs! ($2.75)

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*Controversial covers!*
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#1 -- Tim Truman/VanHook/Gustovich. Ltd. quantities ($5.00)
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#3 -- Truman action cover! ($2.25)
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#1 -- Brunner, Chaykin, Muth, and more! 1st edition! SOLD OUT FROM THE PUBLISHER! ($15.00)

I'M TAKING OFF FOR THE DAY, SIMONS.
WHERE WILL YOU BE IF WE NEED YOU, LOOT?
NYPD
DON'T NEED ME!
PRETTY GOOD WORK, LARABEE, FINDIN' OUT SO MUCH ABOUT COCHRAN.
NOT REALLY, I'M IN MY SECOND YEAR OF NIGHT LAW AT COLUMBIA. IT'S JUST A MATTER OF KNOWING WHO TO ASK.
IS SHE OKAY, SERGEANT?
SAFAR
"SHE'S REAL DEEP, LARABEE, TRYIN' TO WORK OUT SOME PERSONAL STUFF, I GUESS... HARD T' SAY."
A BOTTLE OF TEQUILA.
YOU WANT SALT WITH THAT?
SURE.
NYPD

"LOOKS LIKE LADY LUCK'S IN YOUR CORNER TONIGHT, SELBY."
CLOSED
"IT'S NOT LUCK, IT'S SKILL. ANYBODY GOT THE TIME?"
THAT'S THE THIRD TIME YOU'VE ASKED IN TEN MINUTES, SELBY. IT'S ONLY ONE. YOU GOIN' SOMEWHERE?
NOT TILL I GET SOME 'A MY MONEY BACK, HE AIN'T.
NO NEED FOR CONCERN, GENTS, THIS CHAIR AND I HAVE DEVELOPED A BEAUTIFUL RELATIONSHIP...
...I'M PLANTED HERE FOR THE NEXT--
WHAMM
WHAT'S 'A PROBLEM?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? YOU'LL QUEER THE WHOLE--
click
GOD, DON'T--!

BANG BANG BANG

"All the News That's Fit to Print"

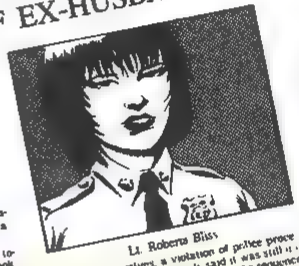
The New York

NEW YORK, WEDNES

VOL.CXXXIX ... No. 48,157

POLICE LIEUTENANT QUESTIONED IN SHOOTING OF EX-HUSBAND

Internal Affairs Division To Interview Suspect



Lt. Roberta Bliss

By RICHARD ANTHONY

Governor Wants Rest of Planned Programs

...I TOLD YOU, I DON'T HAVE AN ALIBI FOR THE SHOOTING, CAPTAIN FLINT. I DON'T KNOW WHERE I WAS AT 1:00 A.M.!

WHAT IS THE LAST PLACE YOU REMEMBER BEING, LIEUTENANT?

I WAS IN A BAR— SOMEWHERE ON THE UPPER EAST SIDE. BUT I LEFT THERE AROUND MIDNIGHT.

GGGGGGGGG

AND WHAT WAS YOUR STATE, LIEUTENANT?

I WAS DRUNK, ALL RIGHT? THAT'S WHAT I SET OUT TO DO, AND THAT'S WHAT I DID!

YOUR NEIGHBOR SAYS YOU DIDN'T ARRIVE HOME UNTIL AFTER THREE... YOU CAN'T ACCOUNT FOR YOUR TIME?

NO.
FLINT, THE LAB SAYS THE SLUGS DIDN'T EVEN COME FROM HER GUN--!
SHE ADMITS SHE DIDN'T TAKE HER PIECE WITH HER! MAYBE SHE BOUGHT ONE, SOMEWHERE!
AND MAYBE SHE'S BEIN' FRAMED, EINSTEIN!
THAT'S A CONSIDERATION WE'LL MAKE AT THE PROPER TIME..
TIME'S GETTIN' A LITTLE SHORT, IF YOU ASK ME!
LT. ROBERTA BLISS, YOU ARE ORDERED TO TURN IN YOUR WEAPON AND SHIELD UNTIL SUCH A TIME AS A JUDGEMENT HAS BEEN MADE ON THIS MATTER...
"HE DOESN'T HAVE AN APPOINTMENT, MISS MAYS, BUT HE SAYS IT'S QUITE URGENT."
SEND HIM IN, SANDY, AND SEND MY ELEVEN O'CLOCK TO MR. HARMON.
HELLO, SERGEANT. I THINK I KNOW WHAT THIS IS ABOUT...
YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE THE PROFESSOR TO FIGURE THAT OUT, MISS MAYS. I GOTTA TALK TO YOU!

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# INNOVATION™

**PRESS RELEASE**

**For: immediate release**

**ISABELLA RETURNS TO JUSTICE MACHINE**

Innovation's Justice Machine #5 marks the reunion of best-selling writer Tony Isabella and Justice Machine creator/illustrator Mike Gustovich. When these two last collaborated on the series, during the Comico run of Justice Machine, this title reached its highest readership levels ever.

"Betrayed," written by Tony Isabella and illustrated by Mike Gustovich (The Avengers), is the first chapter in the trilogy "Demon, We Hardly Knew Ye," which starts off with the Justice Machine members' return to their own universe at the end of June's Hero Alliance/Justice Machine crossover, only to find that, in their own universe, they have been unwitting pawns of an evil worldwide conglomerate.

The Justice Machine team then goes free-lance to put a permanent stop to the insidious machinations of the Uoumi Company, and its sadistic leader, Oyabun.

"I've always thought that Tony (Isabella) was the best writer Justice Machine has ever had," said Justice Machine creator/illustrator Mike Gustovich. "It's good to have him bac' on the book again."

"I'm really getting a kick out of working with the characters again," said writer Tony Isabella. "Along with most vile villain I've ever seen, we've got quite a few oth surprises planned to shake things up and rekindle th excitement that has always been a part of Justice Machine.

"It's fun, but coming back to Justice Machine has be quite a challenge, too," Isabella continued. "Coping with changes this series has gone through over the years and m a fresh start, while still keeping on track with th Justice Machine continuity, has not been eas well worth the effort."

In full color, with a cover is scheduled to ship I

*LEGENDS OF THE STARGRAZERS #6*

*"All The Sins That Are My Life..."*

*THE MAZE AGENCY ANNUAL #1*

*Get Into The Spirit Of A Celebration!*

*THE JUSTICE MACHINE #4*

*The Startling Conclusion*

# INNOVATION™

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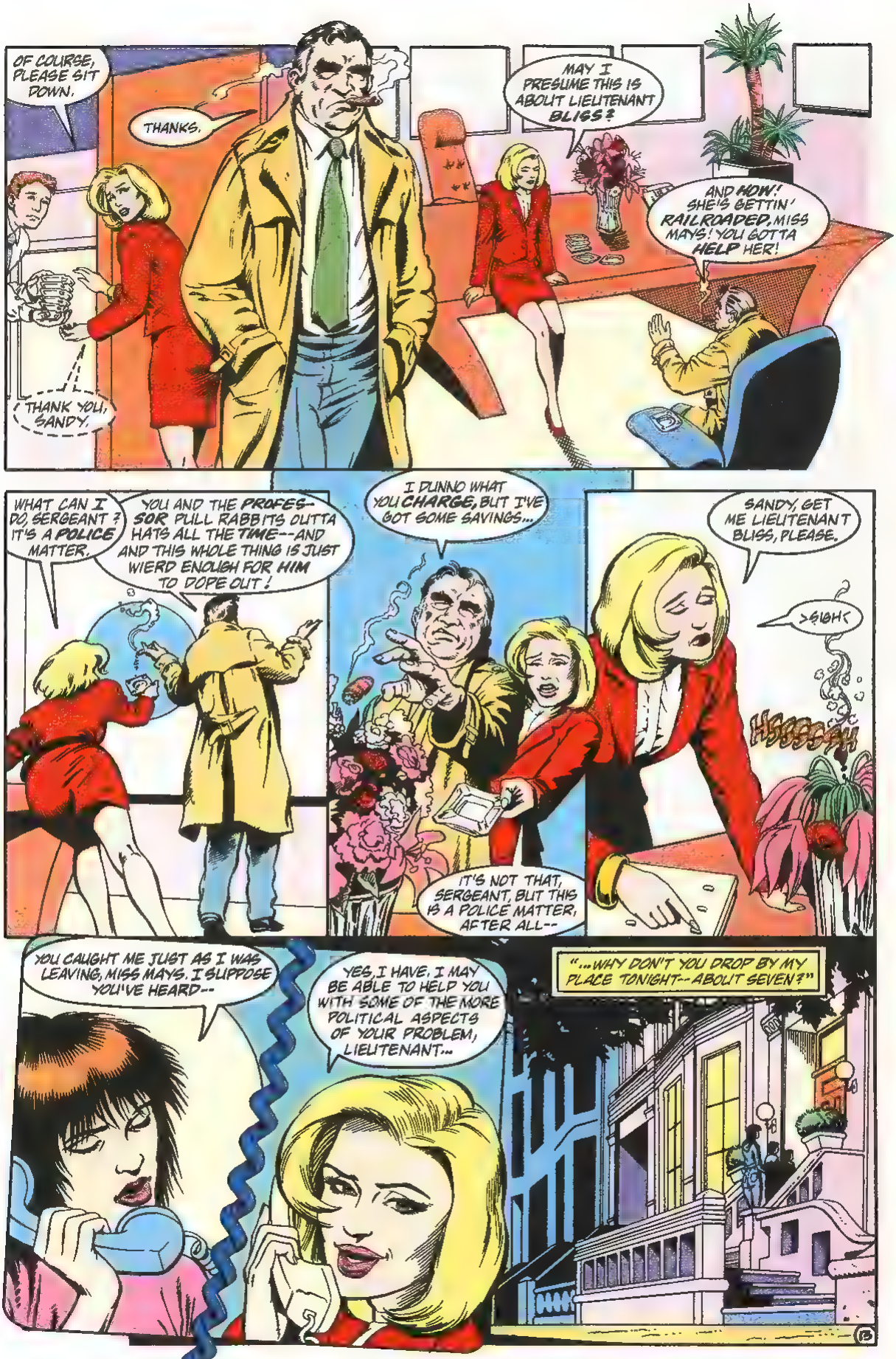
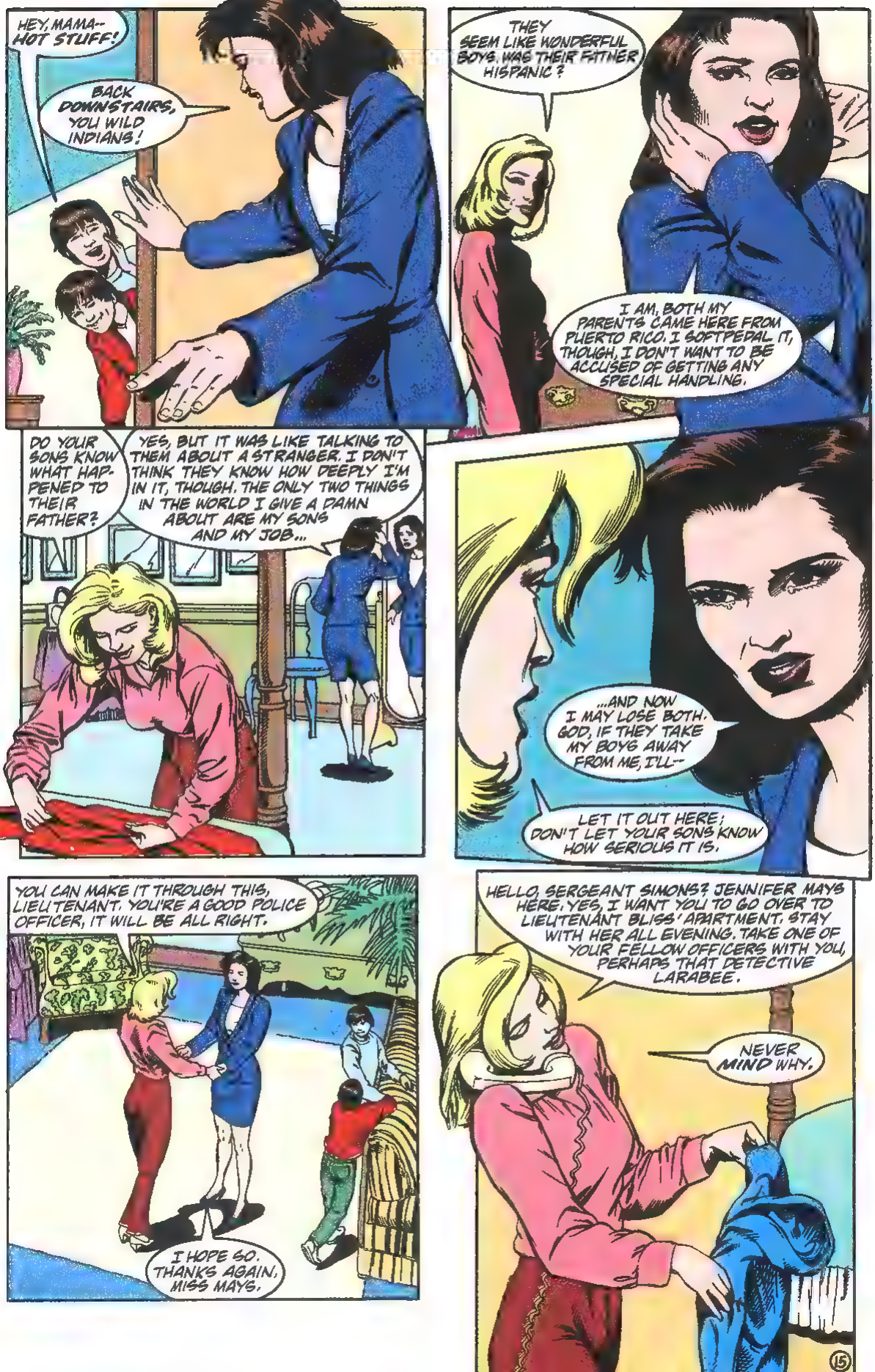
**ON SALE THIS MONTH!**


OF COURSE, PLEASE SIT DOWN.
THANKS.
MAY I PRESUME THIS IS ABOUT LIEUTENANT BLIGS?
AND HOW! SHE'S GETTIN' RAILROADED, MISS MAYS! YOU GOTTA HELP HER!
THANK YOU, SANDY.
WHAT CAN I DO, SERGEANT? IT'S A POLICE MATTER.
YOU AND THE PROFESSOR PULL RABBITS OUTTA HATS ALL THE TIME--AND AND THIS WHOLE THING IS JUST WIERD ENOUGH FOR HIM TO DOPE OUT!
I DUNNO WHAT YOU CHARGE, BUT I'VE GOT SOME SAVINGS...
IT'S NOT THAT, SERGEANT, BUT THIS IS A POLICE MATTER, AFTER ALL--
SANDY, GET ME LIEUTENANT BLIGS, PLEASE.
>SIGH<
HSSSSSSH
YOU CAUGHT ME JUST AS I WAS LEAVING, MISS MAYS. I SUPPOSE YOU'VE HEARD--
YES, I HAVE. I MAY BE ABLE TO HELP YOU WITH SOME OF THE MORE POLITICAL ASPECTS OF YOUR PROBLEM, LIEUTENANT...
"...WHY DON'T YOU DROP BY MY PLACE TONIGHT--ABOUT SEVEN?"

I COULDN'T GET A SITTER... I HOPE IT'S OKAY.
CERTAINLY. PLEASE COME IN.
THIS BIG ONE IS EDUARDO AND THE SHRIMP IS HECTOR. BOYS, THIS IS MISS MAYS.
DON'T CALL ME "SHRIMP," MAMA.
I THINK I HAVE SOMETHING FOR YOU IN THE KITCHEN...
DO YOU HAVE KIDS, LADY?
I HAVE A KID--IN A MANNER OF SPEAKING.
WHY DON'T WE GO UPSTAIRS, LIEUTENANT?
I'M NOT SURE WHY YOU CALLED, MISS MAYS. INTERNAL AFFAIRS WILL BE INVESTIGATING, AND I HAVE A LAWYER.
YOU'RE USED TO DEALING WITH PEOPLE WHO DON'T CARE HOW YOU LOOK, LIEUTENANT...
...I THINK YOU NEED A LESSON IN DRESSING FOR SUCCESS.
NO, I'M NOT! ONE OF THE THINGS I LIKE ABOUT BEING A COP IS THAT YOU DON'T HAVE TO DRESS UP.
HOW DOES THIS LOOK?
IT LOOKS FINE. ARE YOU COMFORTABLE?
"WHEN IN ROME," LIEUTENANT, BELIEVE ME, PROFESSIONAL WOMEN HAVE TO LOOK TWICE AS SHARP AS PROFESSIONAL MEN.


HEY, MAMA-- HOT STUFF!
BACK DOWNSTAIRS, YOU WILD INDIANS!
THEY SEEM LIKE WONDERFUL BOYS. WAS THEIR FATHER HISPANIC?
I AM. BOTH MY PARENTS CAME HERE FROM PUERTO RICO. I SOFTPEDAL IT, THOUGH, I DON'T WANT TO BE ACCUSED OF GETTING ANY SPECIAL HANDLING.
DO YOUR SONS KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO THEIR FATHER?
YES, BUT IT WAS LIKE TALKING TO THEM ABOUT A STRANGER. I DON'T THINK THEY KNOW HOW DEEPLY I'M IN IT, THOUGH. THE ONLY TWO THINGS IN THE WORLD I GIVE A DAMN ABOUT ARE MY SONS AND MY JOB...
...AND NOW I MAY LOSE BOTH. GOD, IF THEY TAKE MY BOYS AWAY FROM ME, I'LL--
LET IT OUT HERE; DON'T LET YOUR SONS KNOW HOW SERIOUS IT IS.
YOU CAN MAKE IT THROUGH THIS, LIEUTENANT. YOU'RE A GOOD POLICE OFFICER, IT WILL BE ALL RIGHT.
I HOPE SO. THANKS AGAIN, MISS MAYS.
HELLO, SERGEANT SIMONS? JENNIFER MAYS HERE. YES, I WANT YOU TO GO OVER TO LIEUTENANT BLISS' APARTMENT. STAY WITH HER ALL EVENING. TAKE ONE OF YOUR FELLOW OFFICERS WITH YOU, PERHAPS THAT DETECTIVE LARABEE.
NEVER MIND WHY.
15

WEBB, WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
SHOULDN'T THAT BE MY QUESTION, LIEUTENANT? IT'S MY BIRTHDAY. JEN AND I ARE GONNA CELEBRATE--
♫ HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO ME... ♫
A LIKELY STORY! ASSUME THE POSITION!
NO CONCEALED WEAPONS DOWN HERE, THAT'S FOR SURE!
OKAY, WEBB, YOU'RE >MRRFL< CLEAN!
LIEUTENANT, WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA OF--
JEN? JEN, WHAT'S GOING ON?
LIEUTENANT, WHAT IS THIS? WHERE'S JENNIFER?
LIETENANT--!
SORRY, HONEY, BUT I COULDN'T RESIST TRYING MY DISGUISE OUT ON YOU. MY THESE NOSTRIL INSERTS ARE UNCOMFORTABLE.
JEN, TELL ME YOU'RE NOT GOING TO DO WHAT I KNOW YOU'RE GOING TO DO!
GABE, THE POLICE INVESTIGATION WILL TAKE WEEKS! MAYBE I CAN SHAKE SOMETHING LOOSE--AT THE VERY LEAST, I CAN DEMONSTRATE HOW EASILY LT. BLISS CAN BE IMPERSONATED.
I KNEW THAT'S WHAT YOU WERE GOING TO DO! AT LEAST TRY TO BE CAREFUL!
16

*Penciller **Robb Phipps** made his debut in **THE MAZE AGENCY #10** and, by no coincidence whatsoever, that's the issue we're talking about here...!*

Dear Mike,

The Christmas story will presumably appear in time for Easter; meanwhile, it was a pleasant surprise to find ***MAZE AGENCY #10*** in the pile my shop had saved for me (it had sold out already). I presume the punctuality problems are at the production/printing end, as you were always regular at Comico.

Anyway, I actually solved the mystery well before the end of "Deadly Anniversary." I must be getting better with practice! In fact, as soon as the possible suspects were introduced, the two most likely culprits were Everett and Sondra Leighton, and whilst you set him up somewhat by showing his wife-abusing tendencies, she immediately struck me as the sort of cold, calculating bitch likely to be behind it all. I too worked out that the attempts on Jen's father weren't meant to actually kill; the urn tipped by melting ice would have been impossible to time accurately. And emotional motives are always the strongest.

Meanwhile, the various non-marital affairs going on under the same roof were, well, interesting. It's hardly surprising; Jen's childhood wasn't as pleasant as it should have been. I suppose that for both of her parents, the situation they'd set up wasn't doing either of them any harm, nor their young lovers, really.

As for the upcoming major step in Jen and Gabe's relationship, do I sense a proposal in the offing? Maybe she'll ask him, in fact. After all, he's waiting for her to declare her readiness to commit herself, so what better way of showing it than by popping the question herself? As for Gabe's introduction to Booth, it takes a cool and secure head to casually accept the fact he's just been introduced to the man to whom his girlfriend lost her virginity. It says a lot for their relationship that he did this, and also that she felt able to tell him; or maybe she felt she needed to tell him.

What's the verdict on Robb Phipps? Pretty good -- much better than his work on *Psychoblast*, which didn't particularly impress. Of course, having Rick Magyar inking the book still provides a vital link and a vital touch to the pencils. Robb's layouts are certainly good -- better than Adam's when he started, in fact. After that it's difficult to tell where his and Rick's work begin and end. Do I detect a few problems with the colouring, or the printing thereof?

Anyway, the book's still on the right track, and hopefully has a secure future. A more regular schedule would increase readership, I'd think. But this reader's hooked! See you in, uh, 30? When-ever...take care.

Malcolm Bourne
2 & 4 Bye Road
Shuttleworth, Ramsbottom
Bury, Lancashire BLO OHH, England

*You may have spotted **#10's** killer, Malcolm, but did you solve the victim's dying message? At any rate, you've also spotted a couple of production problems. Monthly publication has been something of a strain for us, but we're working the bugs out and, hopefully, we'll soon be appearing with clockwork regularity. Ditto with our coloring process; each printing press seems to have its own peculiarities, but we think we've got all those demons exorcised, as well. As always, we thank you for your support.*

*--MWB*

Dear Mike,

Recently, I've been hearing this voice (No, I'm not a schizo!!) telling me to "Write to ***MAZE AGENCY***...we really need your letters!" It sounded so desperate that I had to throw my two-bits in....

Although I have not been a big fan of mystery stories, I truly enjoy reading ***THE MAZE AGENCY*** every month. I am extremely glad that Innovation decided to revive this series, and I am pleased to see the direction in which you are taking ***THE MAZE AGENCY*** straight to the top! The artwork is becoming better every issue, and the characters have never looked better. Your mystery stories are not the simplistic, elementary-level style that I have read or seen all too often. In fact, I've rarely been able to solve most of the cases that Jennifer and Gabe have worked on, but I have come close to some of them. Does that mean I am stupid or that the stories are well-crafted pieces of work? Well, I'll vote for the latter choice.

Thanks, Innovation, for bringing back these A-mazing stories!

Thomas May
11520 Hubbard St.
Moreno Valley, CA. 92387

P.S. Jennifer, you look as gorgeous as ever, and Gabe...you are a lucky guy!!

*Well, Thomas, if the choices are: a) a paying customer is stupid, or b) the stories are well-crafted pieces of work, we'll take <u>b</u>, everytime!*

*--MWB*

Dear Mike Barr,

I've just finished re-reading issues #1-#12, and they are some of the best mystery stories I've ever read.

Mr. Barr, you've created two characters whose adventures I enjoy reading every month. The stories and the artists on this book have been excellent. Adam Hughes and Robb Phipps have just been great and, with Rick Magyar inks, the art looks better and better each issue.

Keep up the excellent work.

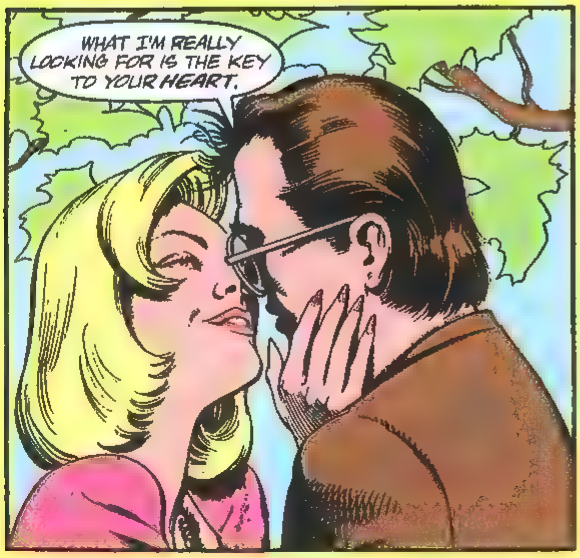
Comics Today (Peter Fisico)
26 Old Park Lane, Richmond Hill
Toronto, Canada

*Thanks, Peter, and a tip of the deerstalker to all MAZE-boosters up there in beautiful Toronto. Your comments about Robb's work make this about the best place to say that he'll be taking a few issues off, while he draws a project for another company (written by Yours Truly, oddly enough). We all hope to see him gracing the pages of MAZE again real soon but, in the meantime, we're trying an array of guest-artists.*

*This issue features the pencilling of* ***Mike Okamoto****, whose work has appeared in* ***Anne Rice's THE VAMPIRE LESTAT*** *(and is upcoming in* ***HERO ALLIANCE #11****), and next issue's lead will debut* ***Allen Curtis****, a penciller I think we'll all be hearing a lot more about. Thanks to* ***Rick Magyar****, for providing some inks, as usual -- along with the always-reliable, always-punctual, always-excellent Mike Witherby, who can usually be found inking* ***HERO ALLIANCE****.*

*However,* ***Adam Hughes*** *will be back next month -- sort of. As a special treat, we'll be re-presenting the four-page "Crime at the Comiconvention" sample story that Adam and Rick did for the 1988 San Diego Con. This story was also printed in* ***MAZE BOOK****, our black-and-white trade paperback collection, along with the first four issues of* Maze*, earlier this year. However, many of you already owned those issues, yet still wanted to see this short story, so we decided to toss it into the pot, for the first time in color. (And for those of you who already own* ***MAZE BOOK****, look at it this way -- you also have all those nifty Hughes/Magyar spot illos of Jen and Gabe.)*

*--MWB*




Hi, Mike,

It's been a long time since I wrote to you, but I thought that you might like to know that I enjoy *THE MAZE AGENCY* so much. I am a French Canadian and my English is somewhat limited, so I can't write you long and constructive letters -- but still I want you to know that what you are doing with Jen and Gabe in their private lives is so good, we can almost feel their love when we read it.

When Comico cancelled the book, I told myself that it was bound to happen. Why? Because every time that I care for a book that is not published by the big two it gets cancelled (*Crossfire, Ms. Tree, Dalgoda,* and *Masked Man*).

All of those books, plus *THE MAZE AGENCY,* are written with love and care from their creators -- and, as far as I am concerned, they are quality books. Thanks to the people at Innovation you are still alive today; and when I go on Friday to pick up my books nothing pleases me more than seeing *THE MAZE AGENCY* (and we have been lucky this past two months, three issues of *THE MAZE AGENCY* came out.)

Thank you for all those wonderful stories and you can count on me to be with you for as long as your book is published.

Daniel Garand
6 Bourget Valleyfield
Quebec, J6S 4G6, Canada

*Thanks for writing, Daniel. No need to apologize for your English, it's fine.*

*--MWB*

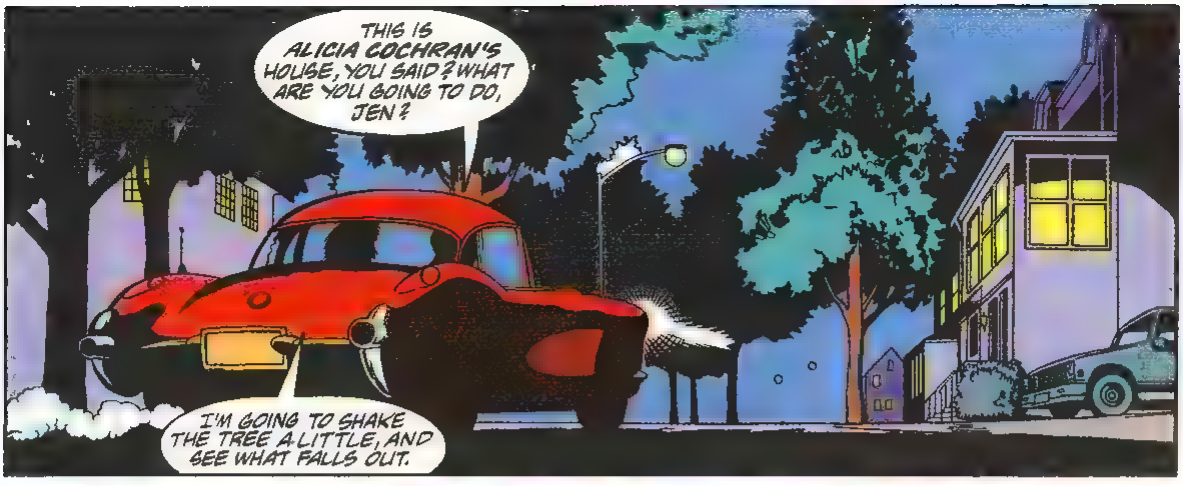
***NOTE TO READERS:*** *Daniel also asked about contacting Rick Magyar. Should you want to contact any of our creative personnel, please mail a stamped letter with the name of the party you wish to contact on it, inside another letter addressed to Innovation. They'll forward it. If you want any kind of a reply, enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope. (This doesn't guarantee you'll get a reply, but if boosts the odds a little.)*

NEXT ISSUE: *Technically, there really won't be an issue of MAZE next month. Instead, there'll be* ***THE MAZE AGENCY ANNUAL #1****! (Had you worried for a minute there, huh?) As noted above, that issue will contain "Crime at the Comiconvention" with art by* ***Hughes*** *and* ***Magyar****. It will also contain two new stories: "Moving Stiffs," with art by newcomer* ***Allen Curtis****,* ***Jim Sinclair****, and* ***Keith Aiken****, in which Gabe finally moves in to Jennifer's place (but not without murderous complications, of course), and "A Night at the Rose Petal," our tribute to -- or pastiche of -- or* ***hommage*** *to -- or* ***something*** *-- to Will Eisner's immortal strip, THE SPIRIT, to celebrate the masked crimefighter's 50th anniversary, with art by the seemingly-omnipresent* ***Magyar****,* ***Darick Robertson****, and* ***William Messner-Loebs****, and a cover by* ***Mike Ploog****! All this plus the re-return of Dr. Rune!*

*Be here, it'll be good! (Blue mask and red tie optional.)*

*--Mike W. Barr*

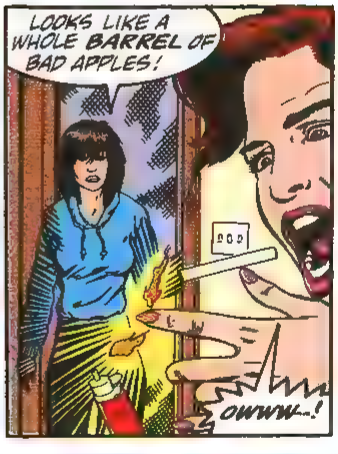
DON'T WORRY, I'VE GOT TOO MUCH TO COME BACK TO...!
=YEEECH< KISSING A SMOKER IS LIKE LICKING AN ASHTRAY! COULDN'T YOU HAVE STUCK TO BUBBLE GUM?
WELL, I DID WANT MY DISGUISE TO BE AUTHENTIC. I ONLY HOPE QUITTING WILL BE EASIER NOW THAN IT WAS YEARS AGO.
MAYBE YOU COULD STAY A BRUNETTE FOR A WHILE. I'VE ALWAYS THOUGHT THE LIEUTENANT WAS KIND OF A BABE...
YOU BEAST!
WELL, I GUESS THIS IS GOODBYE, ACE-- WE'LL CELEBRATE YOUR BIRTHDAY ANOTHER NIGHT. STAY BY THE PHONE, WILL YOU?
LIKE HECK I WILL! I'M COMING WITH YOU!
BABE, IT'S TOO DANGEROUS. DO YOU KNOW HOW BADLY I'D FEEL IF ANYTHING HAPPENED TO YOU?
SURE-- AS BADLY AS I'D FEEL IF ANYTHING HAPPENED TO YOU.
PAR


THIS IS ALICIA COCHRAN'S HOUSE, YOU SAID? WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO, JEN?
I'M GOING TO SHAKE THE TREE A LITTLE, AND SEE WHAT FALLS OUT.

I DON'T KNOW WHY I CAME HERE. I ALREADY TOLD THE POLICE EVERYTHING I KNOW ABOUT POOR TERRY.
"POOR TERRY" WAS PLAYING US BOTH FOR FOOLS, RITA!
YOU CAME HERE BECAUSE I ASKED YOU TO-- AND THAT PROVES MY POINT!

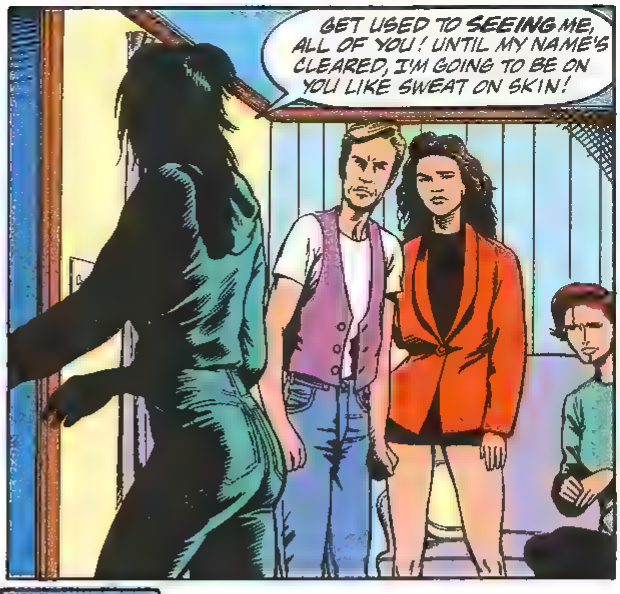
YOU DON'T BELIEVE BLISS KILLED SELBY ANYMORE THAN I DO--I THINK IT WAS ONE OF US!
YEAH, MAYBE YOU! TERRY HATED YOU FOR SENDING HIM UP!
SHE'S GOT A POINT, BROOKS!

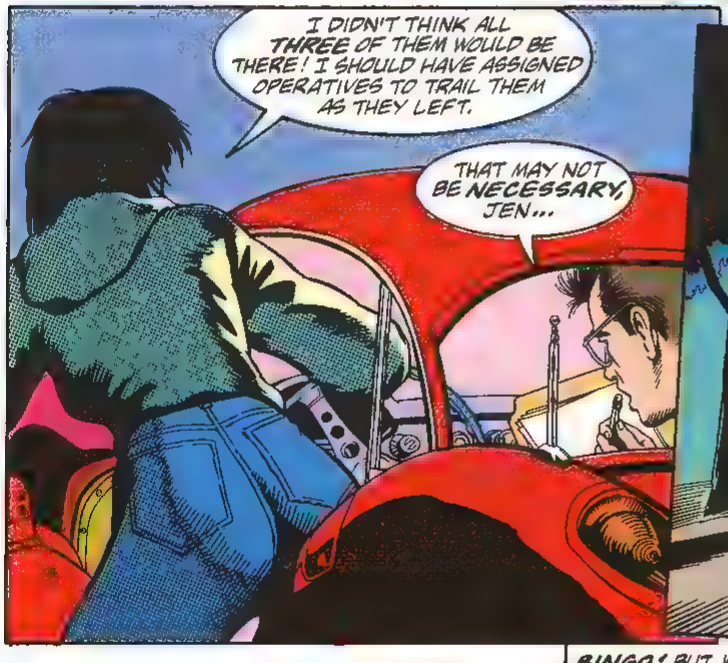
DON'T PLAY THOSE GAMES WITH ME! EITHER OF YOU HONEYS MIGHT HAVE FOUND WHERE HE STASHED HIS MONEY BEFORE HE WENT INSIDE!
DING
DONNNG
GET THAT, WILL YOU, BROOKS?

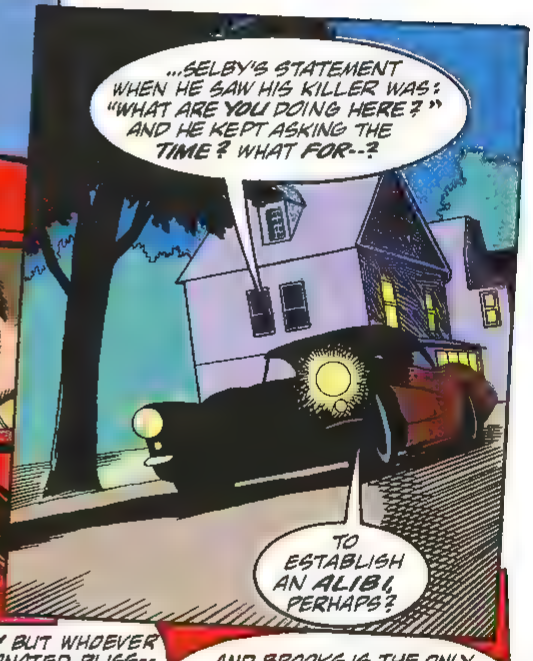

LOOKS LIKE A WHOLE BARREL OF BAD APPLES!
OWWW..!

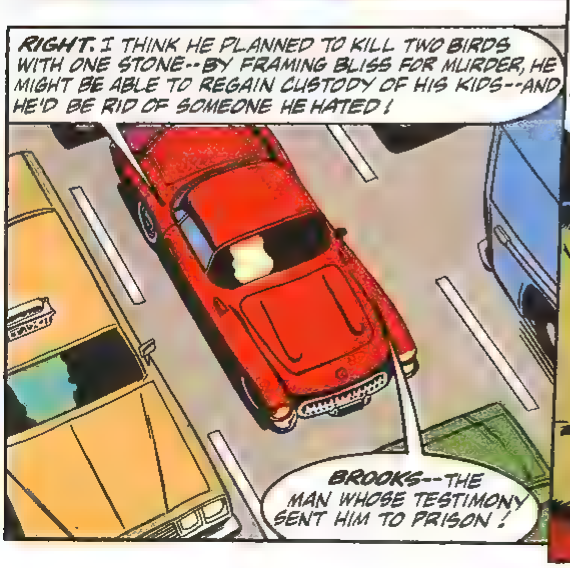
LOOK WHO'S TALKING! COME TO GLOAT OVER HOW YOU DID YOUR EX?
SOMEONE SURE WORKED HARD TO MAKE IT LOOK LIKE I KILLED HIM! MAYBE ONE OF YOU WOMEN, DISGUISED TO LOOK LIKE ME...

...OR MAYBE YOU, BROOKS! YOU'RE SMALL ENOUGH--
--BUT I'M NOT BUTCH ENOUGH!


GET USED TO SEEING ME, ALL OF YOU! UNTIL MY NAME'S CLEARED, I'M GOING TO BE ON YOU LIKE SWEAT ON SKIN!

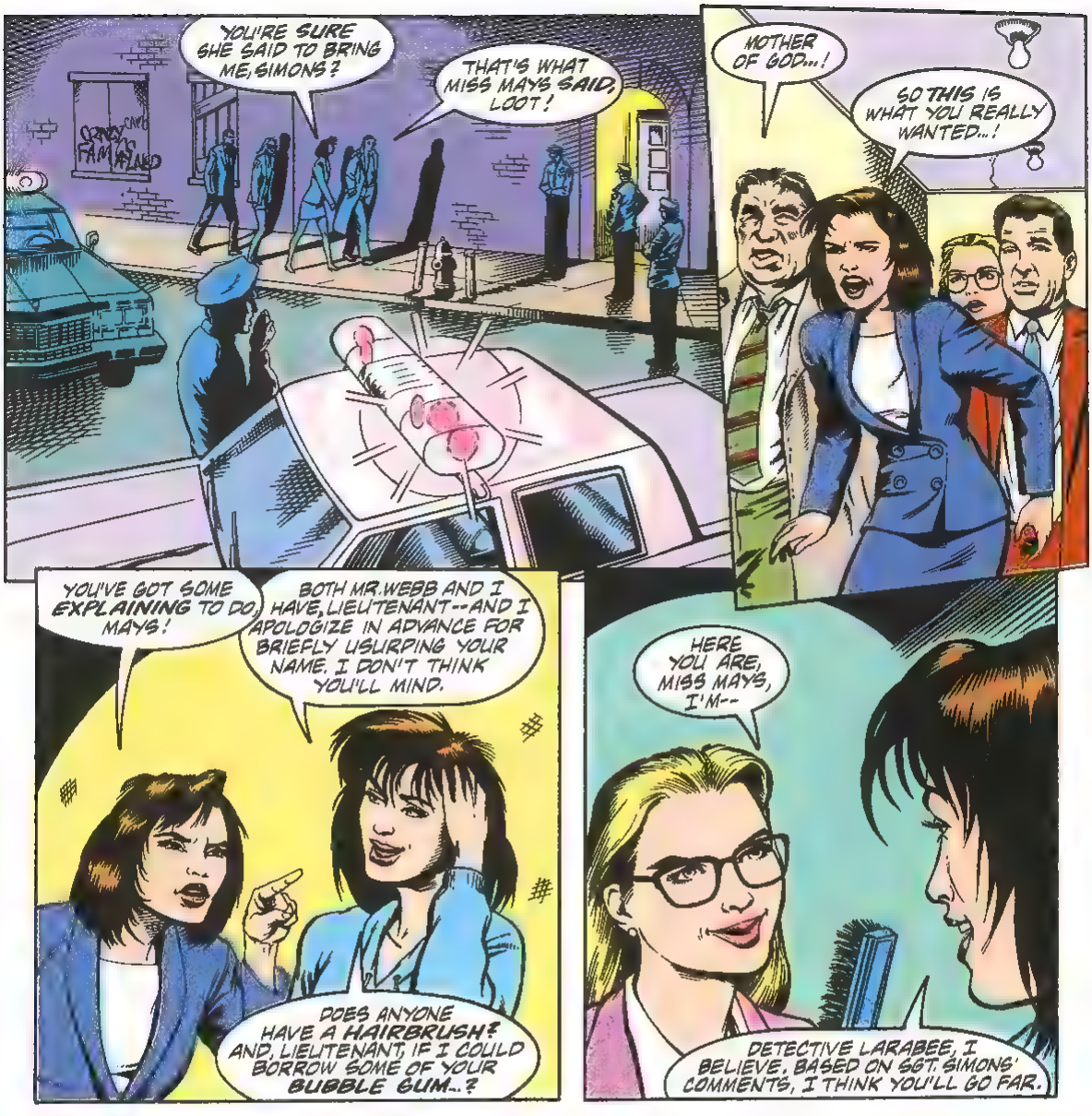

I DIDN'T THINK ALL THREE OF THEM WOULD BE THERE! I SHOULD HAVE ASSIGNED OPERATIVES TO TRAIL THEM AS THEY LEFT.
THAT MAY NOT BE NECESSARY, JEN...

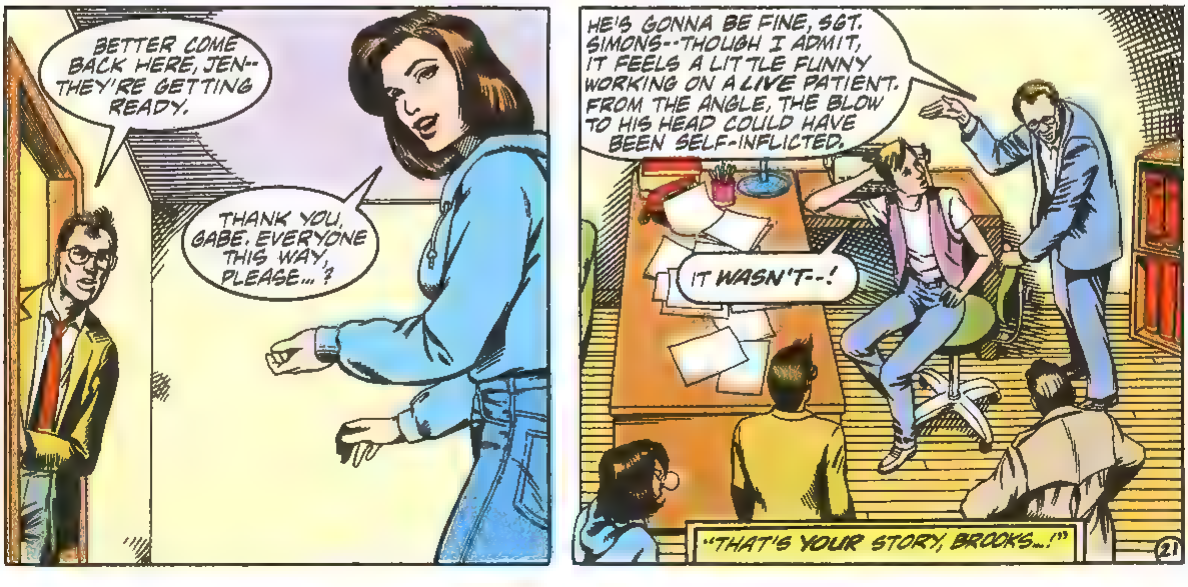

...SELBY'S STATEMENT WHEN HE SAW HIS KILLER WAS: "WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?" AND HE KEPT ASKING THE TIME? WHAT FOR--?
TO ESTABLISH AN ALIBI, PERHAPS?


RIGHT. I THINK HE PLANNED TO KILL TWO BIRDS WITH ONE STONE--BY FRAMING BLISS FOR MURDER, HE MIGHT BE ABLE TO REGAIN CUSTODY OF HIS KIDS--AND HE'D BE RID OF SOMEONE HE HATED!
BROOKS--THE MAN WHOSE TESTIMONY SENT HIM TO PRISON!

BINGO! BUT WHOEVER IMPERSONATED BLISS--EITHER COCHRAN OR MATERO--DOUBLE-CROSSED SELBY AND KILLED HIM INSTEAD!
AND BROOKS IS THE ONLY LOOSE END LEFT...! THERE'S NO CHANCE OF CATCHING UP TO HIM ON THE SUBWAY. WE'LL HAVE TO TRY TO REACH HIM AT HOME!
EEEK
EEEK
MOVE THAT HEAP, FELLA--!

MR. BROOKS! MR. BROOKS!
WHAM WHAM WHAM
BANG
KRASSSH
WHAT WAS THAT?
BACK HERE--!
BROOKS!
IS HE ALL RIGHT?
MAY
UNHHHH...
"HE'S BEEN GIVEN A RATHER SEVERE BLOW TO THE BACK OF HIS HEAD, BUT I THINK HE'LL RECOVER."
I KILLED SELBY.
NEIL BROOKS
GOOD.
AND UNLESS EVERY INSTINCT I HAVE IS WRONG, THIS IS THE GUN THAT KILLED TERRY SELBY.
CALL SGT. SIMONS.
20


YOU'RE SURE SHE SAID TO BRING ME, SIMONS?
THAT'S WHAT MISS MAYS SAID, LOOT!
MOTHER OF GOD...!
SO THIS IS WHAT YOU REALLY WANTED...!
YOU'VE GOT SOME EXPLAINING TO DO, MAYS!
BOTH MR. WEBB AND I HAVE, LIEUTENANT--AND I APOLOGIZE IN ADVANCE FOR BRIEFLY USURPING YOUR NAME. I DON'T THINK YOU'LL MIND.
DOES ANYONE HAVE A HAIRBRUSH? AND, LIEUTENANT, IF I COULD BORROW SOME OF YOUR BUBBLE GUM...?
HERE YOU ARE, MISS MAYS, I'M--
DETECTIVE LARABEE, I BELIEVE. BASED ON SGT. SIMONS' COMMENTS, I THINK YOU'LL GO FAR.


BETTER COME BACK HERE, JEN--THEY'RE GETTING READY.
THANK YOU, GABE. EVERYONE THIS WAY, PLEASE...?
HE'S GONNA BE FINE, SGT. SIMONS--THOUGH I ADMIT, IT FEELS A LITTLE FUNNY WORKING ON A LIVE PATIENT. FROM THE ANGLE, THE BLOW TO HIS HEAD COULD HAVE BEEN SELF-INFLICTED.
IT WASN'T--!
"THAT'S YOUR STORY, BROOKS...!"

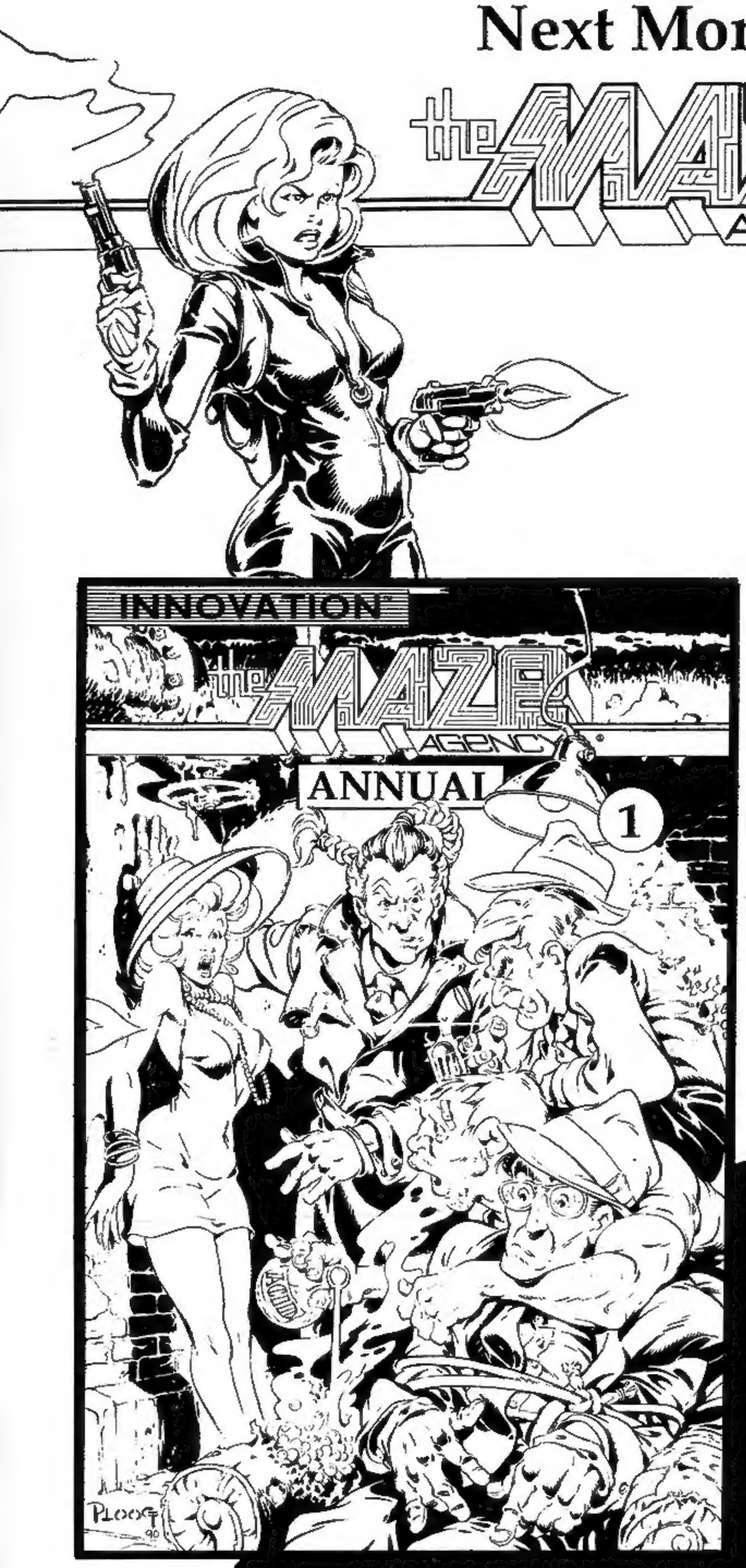
...BUT IT WON'T HOLD WATER! YOUR SUICIDE ATTEMPT FAILED!
SUICIDE ATTEMPT? ARE YOU NUTS, COCHRAN? SOMEONE TRIED TO KILL ME-- MAYBE IT WAS YOU!
MAYBE IT WAS! I NEVER MET A LAWYER I COULD TRUST!
AND I SUPPOSE YOU HAVE AN ALIBI FOR EVER SINCE YOU LEFT MY PLACE, YOU LITTLE TRAMP?
I THOUGHT NOT!
PLEASE, SETTLE DOWN...
"...I THINK MR. WEBB CAN SORT THIS OUT."
THIS WAS SUPPOSED TO LOOK LIKE A SUICIDE, YES. MR. BROOKS WOULD BE FOUND DEAD, HERE AT HIS DESK, WITH THIS NOTE BEFORE HIM.
SURE, IT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE HIS HANDWRITING, BUT THAT'S BECAUSE HE'S HAD QUITE A FEW DRINKS.
VIEWED ONE WAY, IT LOOKS LIKE SOMEONE TRIED TO KILL HIM, AND FAKE A SUICIDE-- THE LUMP ON THE BACK OF HIS HEAD, WHICH WOULD BE INDETECTABLE WITH HIS BRAINS BLOWN OUT, WOULD SEEM TO CONFIRM THAT...
I KILLED SELBY.
NEIL BROOKS
22

...VIEWED ANOTHER WAY, IT'S A GENUINE SUICIDE ATTEMPT, WHICH MISS MAYS AND I STOPPED, THEN BROOKS INVENTED A MYSTERIOUS ASSAILANT--WHOM HE CONVENIENTLY DIDN'T SEE-- TO TAKE THE BLAME.
I TOLD YOU, HE WAS WAITING FOR ME WHEN I GOT HOME! HE BROKE THE WINDOW AND LEFT BY THE FIRE ESCAPE.
IS HE LYING, OR NOT? I THINK NOT. OUR KILLER BEGAN AS SELBY'S PARTNER IN HIS ATTEMPT TO DISCREDIT BLISS, AND BROOKS AND SELBY HATED EACH OTHER.
THEN, WHO IS THE KILLER?
THIS WOULD-BE SUICIDE NOTE TELLS US. WHY DID THE KILLER TAKE THE TIME TO HAND-PRINT THE NOTE WHEN THERE WAS A TYPEWRITER HANDY?
WHY...?
...BECAUSE THE KILLER COULDN'T USE THE TYPEWRITER--NOT WITH BOTH HANDS! HAND-PRINTING A NOTE IS FASTER--AND LESS PAINFUL--THAN TYPING WITH ONE FINGER, WASN'T IT, MS. COCHRAN?
YOU PROVE I DID!
WELL, YOUR MOTIVE MUST HAVE BEEN THE MONEY SELBY HAD CACHED AWAY! IF A SEARCH REVEALS YOU'VE FOUND THOSE FUNDS, THAT'S PROOF, ALSO!
WE WOULD HAVE TUMBLED TO HER, EVENTUALLY. WE WON'T PRESS CHARGES FOR IMPERSONATING AN OFFICER--BUT NEXT TIME, MISS MAYS, LEAVE POLICE WORK TO THE POLICE.
OF COURSE, CAPTAIN FLINT.

WE'LL CLEAR UP THE PAPERWORK IN THE MORNING, BLISS--IN THE MEANTIME, I KNOW WHERE THESE BELONG.
THANKS, CAPTAIN.
CONGRATULATIONS, LIEUTENANT. SORRY I WAS SOMEWHAT DEVIOUS.
"SOMEWHAT?" BUT THANKS, MISS MAYS.
ONE THING ABOUT BEING WITH YOU, JEN--CELEBRATING MY BIRTHDAY HAS BECOME ANYTHING BUT ORDINARY.
I ALMOST FORGOT...!
WHAT ARE YOU TWO LOOKING AT?
End

# INNOVATION™

## Get Into The Spirit Of Things Next Month In

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